THE PORT LAWS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 1997

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN): Sir, I beg to move for leave to introduce a Bill further to amend the Indian Ports Act, 1908 and the Major Port Trusts Act, 1963.

The question was put and the motion was adopted.

SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN: Sir, I introduce the Bill.

THE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SAFAI KARAMCHARIS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 1997

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM): Sir, on behalf of my colleague, Shri Balwant Singh Ramoowalia, I beg to move for leave to introduce a Bill to amend the National Commission for Safai Karamcharis Act, 1993.

The question was put and the motion was adopted.

SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM: Sir, I introduce the Bill.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI AJIT P.K. JOGI): Now, we shall take up the Railway Budget.

RE: AUDIT REPORTS FOR 1995-96

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL (Rajasthan): Sir, I drew your kind attention yesterday and earlier also that the Audit Reports for the year 1995-96 had not been made available to the Members of Parliament. You read out something from the Finance Ministry. Today we find in the newspapers that some portions of the Report have been published. I went to the Publications Counter. Right now I am coming from there after enquiring about the availability of the Audit Reports. They have told me that they have not received the Audit Reports for being made available to the Members of Parliament. What is this? We are going to have a discussion on General Budget on Monday. How will we dispose of the financial business? What is this Government doing? They have no business.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (DR. U. VENKATESWARLU): Sir, we have not yet received these Reports from the Comptroller and Auditor General.

SHRI S.B. CHAVAN (Maharashtra): Then how are you going to discuss them?...(*Interruptions*)...

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: Yesterday the reports with regard to Customs and Excise were laid on the Table. These reports are also not available with the Publications Counter. ...(*Interruptions*)...

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI AJIT P.K. JOGI): We have received a communication ...(*Interruptions*)...

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: I think it is regarding the U.P. Reports. ...(*Interruptions*)...

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI AJIT P.K. JOGI): No, no, there is a communication which has just come before me. I will just read it out. It is in regard to what we discussed yesterday in connection with the question raised by you. It says, "It is understood that some of the Members of the Rajya Sabha have been asking for the Annual Report of the Ministry of Finance. This is to inform you that the Annual Report of the Ministry of Finance is due latest by 19th March, 1997, as per the D.O. letter dated February, 13, 1997 of the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs. We will present the Annual Report for the year 1996-97 before 19th March, 1997."

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: Sir, I am asking about the Audit Report, not the Annual Report.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI AJIT P.K. JOGI): There is another letter about the Audit Report. It says that they have not been received from the C & AG.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: That is with regard to the other report which has not been received. I am asking those two reports which have already been laid on the Table of the House yesterday. You directed the hon. Minister to enquire about them. Even those two reports which have been laid on the Table of the House are not available at the Publications Counter. The reports are regarding Excise and Customs.

DR. U. VENKATESWARLU: Sir, these Audit Reports have also not been received. Even without these reports the discussion took place in the Lok Sabha. That is the position. Otherwise, there is no difficulty for the Government to make them available to the hon. Members.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: This is ridiculous. You have laid those reports on the Table of the House with the permission of the Chair, and those reports are not made available. Today, they have been published in the newspapers.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI AJIT P.K. JOGI): Mr. Minister, the moment you laid it on the Table of the House, it becomes the property of the House...

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: I am entitled to have a copy of it. You cannot do like this.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI AJIT P.K. JOGI): That is why the Member is entitled to see it.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: The Government seems to be in a complete disarray. What is this? It is a joke.

DR. U. VENKATESWARLU: Sir, the reports have not been received. This is the information I have. Anyway, I will find out.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: I think, yesterday or the day before yesterday, the hon. Minister of State for Finance has assured the Chair about submission of the reports.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI AJIT P.K. JOGI): It was the day before yesterday.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: What happened to that? You are making false promises even on the floor of the House. I can understand that you make false promises outside, but not on the floor of the House which becomes part of the proceedings.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI AJIT P.K. JOGI): At least, reports which you have already laid on the Table of the House should be made available to those Members who wanted to see them.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: No, to every Member.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI AJIT P.K. JOGI): Those who do not want to see them, may wait. But, you wanted to see them.

SHRI S.B. CHAVAN: How do you find out whether hon. Members are interested or not?

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI AJIT P.K. JOGI): Whosoever is interested, please make sure.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: Sir, if the reports are not made available by Monday before the discussion on the General Budget starts, I am saying that there will be a problem in this House. I warn this Government.

DR. U. VENKATESWARLU: We will do it.

THE BUDGET (RAILWAYS), 1997-98

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU (West Bengal): Thank you, Mr. Vice-Chairman. At the very outset, I would like to point out that I will try to limit myself on the whole question of the condition of the railway as an industry and the financial restraints that the railway faces today. The other aspects relating to amenities to passengers, passengers' safety and the question of development of railways in our State and in the other States, would be taken up by my colleagues. We have been debating this since yesterday. In this 50th year of India's Independence, we have reached a point where we have to ponder over what the railway is really meant for. What is the purpose of the railway? What is the conceptual framework that you provide for running the railways? I say this with a touch of sadness because of the kind of expansion, the kind of role that was assigned to the railways and that the railways was playing at the point of our independence. We see, in spite of Eight Five Year Plans, that we have traversed all these years, the kind of progress that was supposed to have been made by the railways has actually not taken place. Actually, railway is a multifaceted entity. Railway is an infrastructure. Today, the present Government has assigned a lot of importance to the very question of infrastructure development. But, the dire straits in which the Railways are, and given the fact that the Railways are the major